

Popularity of distance education: a look to student's feedback with reference to IDOL

Abstract: Introduced first in 1858 by the University of London, distance mode of education has been fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems particularly in developing countries. In India, University of Delhi is the pioneer in this field that introduced DOL in 1982. But in northeastern region, the credit for successful introduction of distance and open learning goes to Guwahati University. With the introduction of this mode of education the university has given opportunity to thousands of hitherto excluded students to have access for higher education. The university has got separate school called Distance and Open Learning (IDOL) and IDOL has opened its study centers across the state. At present, several thousands of students have got enrolment for various courses and programmes offered by the IDOL. However, it will be interesting to explore for the attention of various quarters whether the IDOL is successful in terms of supplying quality study materials, redressing student's grievances, and thus according full satisfaction to the students. Further it will also be encouraging to identify the force that persuades students to go for this mode of education. Keeping these few objectives in mind, a survey was conducted in the month of December, 2011 among 100 students pursuing distance mode of education under IDOL in Darrang College centre. The outcome of the study shows that IDOL has been successful in terms of quality study materials but lacking behind in according full satisfaction to students.

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Introduction: formal or conventional system has certain limitations as a result of which it is not accessible to all. There is no alternative way to achieve the goal of 'Education for All' excepting the distance and open learning. Distance education is a concept where the subject content is delivered to the students with the use of media and postal services. This mode of education tries to remove all the barriers like admission rules, number of seats, attendance, geographical periphery, place constrains and so on. Here teacher and students occasionally met. Distance mode of education was introduced first in 1858 by the University of London by Charles Dickens but the University of South Africa is the first full-fledge university on distance mode. With the passage of time, this mode of education has been fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems particularly in developing countries. In India, the foundation of distance mode of education was laid down by the University of Delhi. This university introduced DOL in 1982 and thus has been providing access to education to large sections of the society who has neither time nor monetary power to obtain degrees under the conventional or formal system. This system is characterized by self explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating and self-motivating. At present several thousands of universities have introduced this mode of education and many universities have been established in different states of the country. The door for students opting for such an opportunity in Northeast India was opened by the Guwahati University. With the introduction of this mode of education, the university has given opportunity to thousands of hitherto excluded students have now access to higher education while sitting at home or work place that is too at a cost-effective way. The university has established a separate school called Institute of Distance and Open Learning (IDOL) and has opened its study centers across the state. This system has emerged as a source of huge revenues for the universities and at the same time adhered to the solution of educated unemployment problems to a significant extent. But it is often argued that the product of this system is not comparable to the product of formal system in many respects and therefore they lack satisfaction. Now some questions blowing in the mind of the authors which

compelled them to collect the student's feedback in the matters like what prompted them to go for this system, whether they think that the quality of course structure is similar to the course structure of formal system, whether they are satisfied with distance mode of educations etc. keeping in mind these issues, a survey was conducted among the students pursuing degrees under the IDOL, Darrang College Center. The outcome of this study is supposed to be useful in leading the programmes towards right direction and at the time confusions hovering in the mind of few may be avoided.

Objectives of the study:

The central idea of this study is to analyze the perception of the students pursuing degrees under the IDOL in respect of motivational factor, course contents and satisfaction. Thus the main objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To know the motivation behind pursuing degree under Distance Education system.
2. To study the student's perceptions towards study materials supplied by IDOL, and,
3. To assess the degree of satisfaction perceived by the students studying under IDOL.

Methodology: The data used for analysis are primary data collected at the field level. A structured questionnaire was administered personally among the students when they can be appearing examinations under Darrang College center. The participants were requested to fill up the form and to turn it after the examination is over. Thus convenience sample survey was used. The criterion for selection of sample was that the persons interviewed must be studying under IDOL. A total 100 students were interviewed. Thus the sample size stood at 100 (N=100). The survey was conducted on Sunday, 8th December, 2011. The data collected were analyzed by constructing frequency tables.

Analysis and findings:

The IDOL was initiated in the Darrang College, Tezpur from the session 2002-03 with a view to established Distance Education programs also known as Distance Learning programs have a wide range of approaches. A predominance of research has used survey questionnaires with closed-ended questions with the range of four different options determined by researcher among the 100 numbers of IDOL educated existing students. We are attempting to know the students psychology which acknowledges the useful to study the distance education as a whole. This research is shifting to the more satisfactory side and strongly urges the effective of value education under distance education system to look as popularity among the population. This type of study seems to have value for distance education programs in different areas. We envision learning for anyone, anytime, anywhere; and for that learning to promote empowerment processes by linking knowledge with economic, social, environmental, cultural and ethical development.

In order to avoid any misunderstandings, everybody should know that the IDOL has had a continuous research and development programme on the use of new technology in distance education since many years. It has actually used various kinds of technology in distance education to the extent. We are convinced that new technologies will be very important for distance education in the years to come. We are sure all of the IDOLs strategy will be for the best for the student which will be available, accessible and are convenient to use or not too much expensive for them. Very often, a simple solution is more effective than a complicated one.

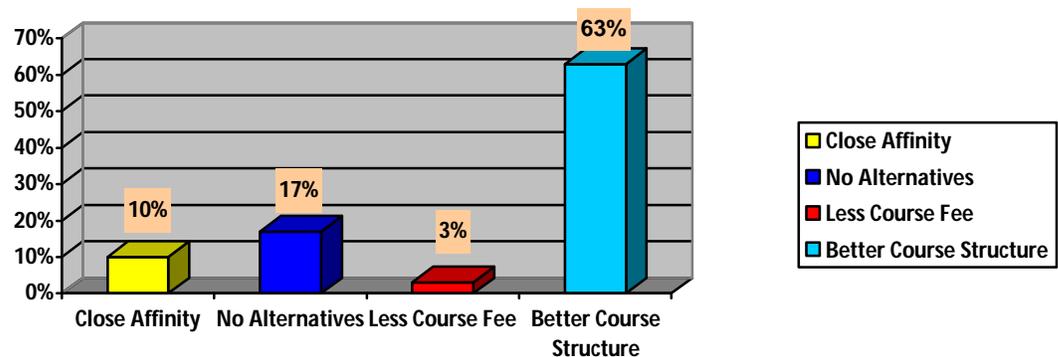
All the respondents belong to the IDOL existing students. It represented almost equal percentage from both boys and girls. While considering the frequency of usage of distance education the following findings are taken from the primary data survey:

1. Respondents were asked to identify their reason to pursue degree through distance mode with the range of four different options.

Sixty-three percent respondents indicated better course structure, Ten percent respondents reported close affinity of their course structure, Seventeen percent respondents indicated no alternatives and only Three percent respondents reported less course fee. Remaining Seven percent are non respondents.

Table: 1

Query	Options			
	Close Affinity	No Alternatives	Less Course Fee	Better Course Structure
reason to pursue degree through distance mode	10%	17%	3%	63%

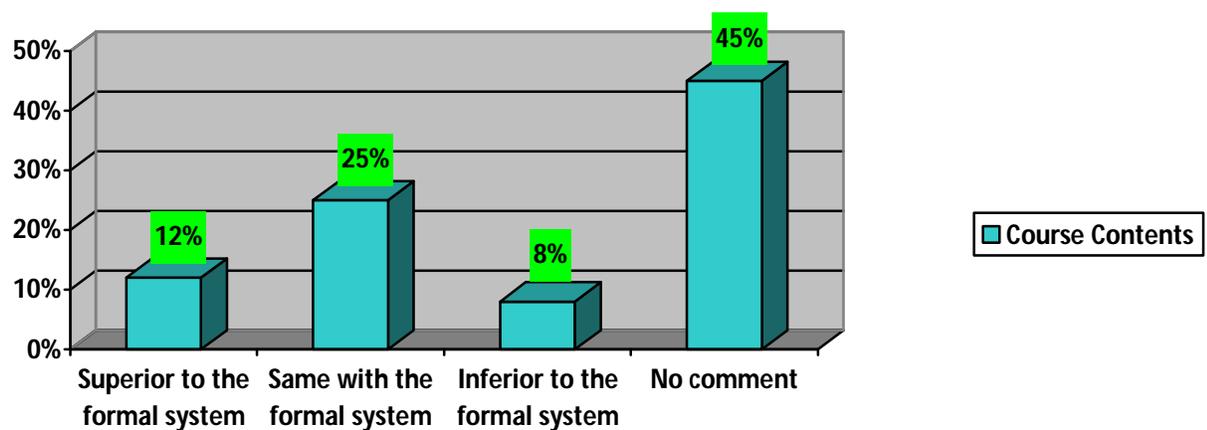


2. Respondents were asked to give their opinion in respect of the course contents of distance education.

Twelve percent respondents indicated course contents are superior to that of the formal system, Twenty-five percent respondents reported course contents are same with that of the formal system, Eight percent respondents indicated course contents are inferior to that of the formal system and Forty-five percent respondents are silent. Remaining Ten percent are non respondents.

Table: 2

Query	Options			
	Superior to the formal system	Same with the formal system	Inferior to the formal system	No comment
Course Contents	12%	25%	8%	45%

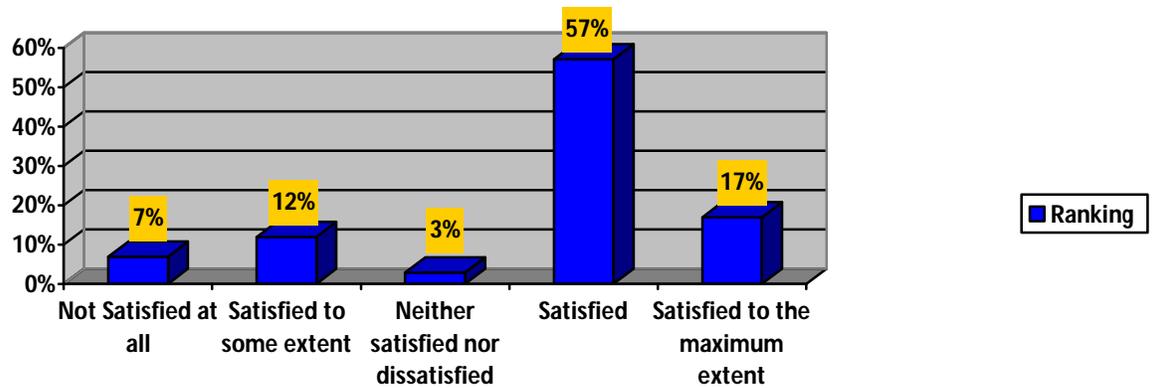


3. Respondents were asked to rank of the level of satisfaction on the distance education.

Seven percent respondents indicated ranking as not satisfied at all, Twelve percent respondents reported satisfied to some extent, Three percent respondents indicated neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Fifty-seven percent respondents are satisfied, Seventeen percent respondents indicate satisfied to the maximum extent. Remaining four percent are non respondents.

Table: 3

Query	Options				
	Not Satisfied at all	Satisfied to some extent	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied to the maximum extent
Rank of the level of satisfaction on the distance education	7%	12%	3%	57%	17%



Conclusion:

After conducting this survey, it is found that most of the respondents were satisfied with the distance education in all areas specially IDOL. A satisfied student is an asset for all distant education provided institution and adds to the distance education goodwill.

In terms of findings obtained, it could be said that distance education occupied the largest positive and definite favourable condition. It may create enough scope for distance education specially IDOL.

The results of this survey are intended, first and foremost, to be of value to distance education. The distance education landscape is changing rapidly and this is new ground for most college administrators. College administrators want to make sure they are making the right decision that will benefit their students, faculty, staff and greater community, and make the very most of limited resources.